

One Year Later: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh

Howard Wriggins

It is now well over a year since Bangladesh separated from Pakistan. General Yahya's decision to quell the independence movement failed. Millions of refugees had fled to India; a guerrilla movement had emerged in East Bengal, and the Indian army had come to its assistance. The Pakistan army was defeated, and now, over a year after the end of hostilities, 80,000 Pakistani troops remain prisoner.

The eruption of 1971 had left Indians with great hope that now, at last, major subcontinental problems would be resolved. The Bangladeshis had looked forward through their bitter misery to a reemergence of the Golden Bengal of legend. And Pakistanis, dismayed by defeat and secession, at least had hoped that a truncated country would be easier to govern.

But in early 1973 everybody is frustrated. Winners and losers alike are in a time of discontent. The Indians find that standing taller on the subcontinent than ever before does not materially change the nature of their real problems. The people of Bangladesh face new difficulties that spring from old divisions and the fires of war. The people of Pakistan find their constitutional problems nearly as intractable as ever and a third of their army still locked up. In all three countries the past years have awakened the people, who now have higher aspirations than ever before.

There are hard questions for each country today. For example: How stands Indira Gandhi's India? What is her domestic political position as compared to her father's? How fares the Congress Party? What constitutional conundrums face the present government of Pakistan? How is Mr. Bhutto dealing with Ayub's legacy? Has Bangladesh recovered from the Pakistan army's attempt to repress the independence movement? Is there a widely shared vision of what Bangladesh is to be like a few years from now?

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New Delhi in June is like a furnace; the harsh, clear sky burns down where there is no protective shade. But in January, 1973, New Delhi is a joy—the air is fresh, the skies are blue and gentle; men and women walk briskly, standing straight. Connaught Circus, the central shopping district of New Delhi, is a hive of bustling, busy people; there is even laughter. And Delhi as a whole is bursting with activity. New buildings are rising everywhere; apartment houses and offices spring up where two or three years ago were but barren fields. The new Jawaharlal Nehru University is flourishing under the able and influential Parthasarathy, former Indian Ambassador to the United Nations.

Nineteen sixty-nine, 1970 and 1971 had been good Indian years on the subcontinent, and no one was left in doubt about it. For three years record bumper crops had been harvested as the Green Revolution took hold, producing sufficient accumulated stocks last year to permit India to send nearly one million tons of food grains to the rescue in Bangladesh. What a contrast to the harsh years of 1966 and 1967 in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa, when India had to import a total of eighteen million tons from the United States and elsewhere!

Domestic politics too showed a new promise in the early 1970's. From the faction-ridden Congress Party of the late 1960's Mrs. Gandhi had snatched the prize of the prime ministership and engineered a substantial election victory. She surrounded herself with people who shared her vision of necessary changes in India's domestic policies. They hoped to turn their back on the bad old politics of patronage and stalemate. She had seemed ready to implement swiftly her bold electoral promises looking toward the elimination of poverty from India.

Nineteen seventy-one had seen a resounding Indian military success against Pakistan's army in East Bengal. Military plans were said to have been carefully shaped and carried through; conventional mil-

itary moves were coordinated with "resistance" harassment of Pakistan's regular army (much as Allied forces worked with the French resistance during World War II), and parachute drops were well executed. To be sure, Pakistan's dispositions over the past fifteen years, particularly during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, demonstrated that Pakistan had never taken the defense of East Bengal seriously. But when one-third of Pakistan's army was drawn into East Bengal in an effort to deal with Sheikh Mujib's autonomists, the Indian army had done a workmanlike job in surrounding them and forcing surrender. Within three months after their success Indian troops had withdrawn. This is one of the neatest politico-military operations the world has seen in many decades.

Now, with what had once been Pakistan divided, India looms taller than ever before, high above its smaller neighbors, preeminent on the subcontinent. Pakistan, with less than half its former population, is only one-eighth as large as India. Without an arms industry, with an army only one-fourth as large as India's, one-third of whose officers and men had surrendered, Pakistan's present weakness and junior status should now be obvious to all. Not since the earliest days of independence has India seemed so clearly the hegemonic power in South Asia.

There is a new self-confidence as Indians talk to Americans. There was a time when it seemed as if American diplomats, advisors, visitors had become surrogates for the former British; their advice was sought on many subjects or, if given gratuitously as often happened, it was listened to politely and sometimes even heeded. But no more. Indeed, the sense of self-confidence was enhanced precisely because Indian success had been achieved in the face of the American President's "tilt" toward Pakistan.

One year later, however, in January, 1973, the mood is different. India's vulnerability to the vagaries of the monsoon was again dramatized. Once more India is short on food grains and must import some two million tons. The United States, however, does not now have the margins it used to, thanks to hard currency sales to the Soviet Union. The convenient days of PL 480 concessional sales, once taken for granted by both American and Indian officials, now seem over. India must compete like anyone else for purchasable supplies and may have to use one-fourth of her hard-won currency reserves to do so. India may again need to be more considerate of others' official sensitivities.

India's industrial growth over the past twenty years has been substantial. The country has some very modern and productive sectors, and industry and mining account for some 25 per cent of net domestic products as compared to roughly 10 per cent in 1950. Nevertheless, industrial growth has not accelerated commensurately in recent years, and

many plants remain severely underutilized. The drought has lowered reservoirs in Northwestern India so that hydroelectric power is severely rationed and blackouts are not infrequent, interrupting industrial production. Foreign exchange reserves have been carefully husbanded against the day, alas now come, when emergency purchases of grains or other necessities would be unavoidable. This meant postponing the import of needed industrial raw materials. Inflation in Britain, Germany and the U.S. has further cut India's purchasing power abroad for machines and spares. This slowdown has meant idle hands and has postponed industrial investment, implying fewer jobs over the next five years.

Of course the data for these observations are most easily available in New Delhi. And the moods of Delhi swing up and down a good deal more sharply than do those in state capitals and provincial towns, where the real dynamics of Indian life evoke the energies and shape the activities of India's millions. Here the visitor sees new plants, more small industries and new levels of personal consumption that the economists' macrodata often do not adequately reflect. Nevertheless, overall the economy has not yet picked up the desired momentum, nor is it yet using to full advantage what plant is already in place.

Politically Mrs. Gandhi's position is now more subtly conditional than it was a year ago. She still commands in New Delhi as no one has done since independence. Indeed, she has consolidated her position during the past two years by her political skills. She has a reputation for ruthlessness toward her opponents, collecting in her hands the multiple threads of perquisite and amenity—the apartments, telephones, travel and foreign exchange permits—by which India's politicians rise above the ruck and harshness of normal life in India. She has a reputation for not holding back on using these potential deprivations against those who do or might stand in her way.

It is said she has a fine hand in dealing with her entourage as well. To have no sure favorites, to move ministers or parliamentary secretaries from job to job, or from job to no job, ensures that no one close to her has a sense of security in her favor. Kautiliya, the alleged advisor to the Mauryan rulers in fourth-century B.C. India, commended such a policy toward courtiers. Mrs. Gandhi needs no such advisor. She learned the art through years of silent watching and listening at her father's side and drawing her own conclusions on how to rule. This approach is effective for retaining personal command over associates, although it risks impeding honest criticism and the passage upward of bad news.

In New Delhi she dominates. In the states, however, her position is not everywhere so commanding. After all, India is a federation with seven states having over 35 million people apiece. One, Uttar Pradesh, has some 90 million people (if it were indepen-

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dent it would be larger than all but five of the 113 members of the United Nations). And the constitution provides that each state will have major legislative and administrative powers, particularly on agricultural and land policy and on taxes other than income taxes on industrial profits. It is therefore easy to expect too much from a prime minister who presides over a polity as complex and variegated as Western Europe. Moreover, during the time of her father the Congress Party provided one of the great integrating instruments, for it held commanding majorities in nearly all states. Since the deterioration of the Party in the 1960's it is less useful for that integrative purpose.

To be sure, a number of chief ministers (the elected political leaders of each state) are virtually her appointees and are therefore responsive to her will. On the other hand, a number of these lack local support and in consequence are not able to implement her desires as they might wish. In West Bengal, on the other hand, there has been dramatic change in the Congress Party's favor. For years Congress strength had been decaying, under the combined impact of decrepit and corrupt leadership, acute and persisting factionalism in the remains of Congress and increasingly radical political agitation among the cities' miserably poor or the Bengali middle class, who came to believe that Delhi cared little for Bengal's plight. Prior to the last election, political violence had become so rife that many left leaders were killed by their opponent's followers; others were constrained under Mrs. Gandhi's Governor's Rule. Beneath the umbrella of the heavy military presence along the East Pakistan border and her dramatized concern for the plight of fellow-Bengalis, she built a new, younger, more dynamic Congress, which now rules in West Bengal. Three years ago it would have been inconceivable that a Congress Party annual convention could have been held in Bengal. But this year she pulled it off, without provoking even a major disturbance. This is a crucial accomplishment, since West Bengal is one of India's great industrial centers. Reasonable order and domestic peace there can bring a surge of industrial production.

India's approach to legislation is very different from our own, and Mrs. Gandhi's is consistent with that of her predecessors. Legislation in India is as much normative as it is imperative. Legislation passed by the majority party in the Parliament sets goals, defines aims, evokes a symbol of where the

country ought to go. It is only through a complex process of inconspicuous bargaining between power groups in the society and in the bureaucracy, mediated through the politicians, that the pace and scope of implementation are gradually defined.* Thus Mrs. Gandhi has sought, and in some cases obtained, legislation regarding bank nationalization, land ceilings on urban property, rural land reform, etc. These are all parts of her program to demonstrate that she seeks greater equity in a highly inequitable society.

But the implementation of the legislation already passed turns out to be a very different matter. Symbolic legislation merely for political effect, some call it. But others see a more subtle process of attempting to adapt this enormous, complicated and in part very traditional society to the requirements of a more demanding, modern and productive economy. In 1971, after all, India was the unwilling host to six to eight million refugees; and all government efforts were focused on Bengal. One year, 1972, is hardly enough time to move India very far along her road.

There is a new dimension in domestic politics as India's voting masses become less impressed by the automatic standing of the majority leader than they used to be. Mrs. Gandhi, daughter of Mr. Nehru, embodies the continuation of a Nehru-Gandhi dynasty in the Mogul tradition. She is, however, also the lady who won an election in part by promising to do away with poverty. She is therefore more hard pressed to perform in this direction than any of her predecessors. Can she manage to show results in time for the next election? Or, instead, to find sufficient symbolic issues to evoke continuing popular enthusiasm, or at least acquiescence to her rule, even though her promises continue to go far beyond what her regime will be able to deliver?

In foreign policy the Soviet agreement in the summer of 1971 played a critical role in assuring India backing should she run into difficulties with China or the United States over her active policy in East Bengal. According to gossip in New Delhi, the Russian supplies have more than made good the losses incurred in the fighting with Pakistan, and the prospect of continued logistical support relieves many anxieties.

* I am indebted to Suzanne Rudolph for this perspective, in conversation.

On the other hand, it is said that the costs of paying for this equipment are becoming increasingly annoying, as goods must go to Russia which otherwise might be exported to the world market—particularly when hard currency is again needed for food grain purchases and the price of grain is at an unprecedented height because of Soviet purchases in America. Despite the fact that many believe there are strong personal affinities between some of Mrs. Gandhi's advisors and Moscow, it is widely believed that she maintains a contest among advisors and keeps herself free to orient Indian policy in whichever way she wishes. There is little doubt that her government will find ways of remaining independent of Moscow on critical issues. Should Moscow begin to take India for granted, she and her officials will prove highly proficient in disabusing the Russians of that assumption.

China remains a thorn in the side. China's nuclear weaponry worries the strategists, and China persists in supporting Pakistan. This was recently dramatized by the warm reception given to General Tikka Khan, Pakistan's Army Chief of Staff, when he visited Chou En-lai in January of this year.

Relations with the United States remain enigmatic ever since they hit a new low with the American "tilt" toward Pakistan and with what the White House considered Mrs. Gandhi's undue haste to intervene in Bangladesh. Will the United States accord India the status it believes it now deserves as preeminent on the subcontinent? Will its assistance, if needed, be of a kind Indian pride can now accept? The Moynihan appointment suggested to New Delhi that the White House was again prepared to take India seriously. But many suspect that India could no longer count on American economic or other assistance unless it was as careful of Washington's sensibilities as it appeared to be of Moscow's.

In Pakistan Doxiadas's new buildings shine whitely against the mountain backdrop at Islamabad as the plane circles toward the airport of the new city. The city's carefully graduated districts separate government clerks from supervisors, and these from senior secretaries, cabinet ministers and diplomats. It bespeaks an ordered, disciplined and tidy design for governance, symbolic more of Ayub's hopes than of the reality of Pakistan's stormy and conflicting politics.

At the center of Pakistan's political drama is Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Westernized graduate of California universities, scion of a wealthy, landed Sindhi family, who promised Pakistan's millions a radical new deal and his Punjabi hearers a hard policy toward India in the 1970 election. He has been likened to a circus tightrope walker; all eyes are focused on him as he makes his perilous way. He is seeking to shape a constitution which will leave him in charge yet open the way to legitimate and "responsible"

political expression. He now seems to be nudging Pakistan toward accepting its reduced status in South Asia. A different pattern of economic growth will have to be devised that will be productive, more equitable and adapted to the reality of Pakistan without Bengal.

Bhutto's strength comes from the fact that his political reach encompasses a wider variety of Pakistan's politically active people and groups than any other's. His "party," the Pakistan People's Party, has virtually no organizational structure. Increasingly he is seen as the one whose capacity to find near-magical solutions to impossible political problems makes him the indispensable man.

He is many things to many people. He is clearly a secularist, impatient with the ardent Islamists. Pakistan must be modern. And he is fully aware that Pakistan is not as yet an integrated state, but is still made up of a number of peoples with different lifestyles and strong regional attachments. India has an even more marked diversity. However, India has been able to fashion an institutional framework and develop political processes and patterns of opportunity which have great resilience and are moving India toward greater national integration. The nightmare of the leaders of the present new Pakistan is a repetition of the autonomist pulls which so recently tore the old Pakistan in half.

How to combine sufficient autonomy to reassure the leaders of Pakistan's diverse provinces with sufficient coherence and centralization to permit effective development policies and a united front toward Pakistan's neighbors? This presents as difficult a constitutional conundrum as faces any leader of the new states in Asia and Africa.

The most immediate constitutional problem is posed by Wali Khan, in the North-West Frontier area of tough Pathan tribesmen, whose inhospitable mountains lie between the Indus Valley, the heartland of Pakistan, and southern Afghanistan, whose royal family is of similar Pathan descent. It is improbable that the North-West Frontier people want to join the much more backward Afghanistan. Hard bargaining is part of the political style of the area, and Wali Khan appears to be pushing Bhutto as far as he dares, seeking to obtain as much autonomy for "his" province as possible, thereby strengthening his own local political following. Bhutto knows that he himself bargained à *outrance* with General Yahya and Sheikh Mujib in March, 1971; perhaps Wali Khan will play the game as hard—and with similar devastating results in 1973, though this seems unlikely. And turbulence in Baluchistan continues to be worrisome.

Indeed, in March Bhutto abruptly fired the governors of both provinces, who had been associated with Wali Khan, and dismissed both Provincial assemblies. This gained him temporary respite but intensified provincial suspicions of his long-run ambitions.

Many believe the army is still in shock from the events of March through December, 1971. Bhutto sustains the defense budget to help ensure their political quiescence and to reassure those who worry about an overmighty India. Military equipment from China and, some say, \$20 to \$30 million from the oil states of the Middle East make this possible. The army, reportedly, is sharply ambivalent regarding dealing with Bangladesh—Bhutto wants to recognize Dacca, get the prisoners back and return to “normal” economic and political relations; elements of the army find it inconceivable that Bangladesh can be recognized until Mujib promises no trials and the prisoners of war are back. Bhutto publicly urges recognition but moves cautiously, apparently awaiting an initiative from Dacca.

At home, Bhutto is attempting to deal with Pakistan's bureaucracy in new ways. Pakistan has been ruled mainly along lines of the Vice Regal British Raj, where the executive civil servants have been secure in their tenure and systematically insulated from popular political pressures. Their competence as law-and-order officials has been high; and under Ayub they encouraged the rapid growth of some industries and sharp improvement in agricultural output. But the inequities in these policies—that very insulation from the influence of representative political spokesmen and the resulting arrogance of administrative style—have made this mode of administration intolerable for the future. Over a thousand permanent officials have been fired, and the President has inserted into key positions numerous lateral entrants, men drawn from civilian life, often considerably younger than the senior officials they now supervise. It is suspected that a number of political debts are being paid this way. But there is also evidence that energetic and innovative men are taking to their new responsibilities, pushing and shoving the staid administration to function in new and more elastic ways.

There is also a new sense of open debate on public issues. To be sure, some newspapers have been intimidated into more “responsible” reporting, and the lot of the systematically oppositionist journalist is difficult. There are even echoes that trumped up lawsuits are once again being stimulated against political oppositionists whose efforts might weaken Mr. Bhutto's position. Yet alternative approaches and serious criticisms are far more openly debated than has been typical since 1958. Alternative policies are now aired; opposition politicians have the scope and means to organize that they lacked under Ayub.

A reorganization of university life is under way. The graduate university of Islamabad, now led by a dynamic lady vice chancellor, Dr. Kamis Yousuf, directs more attention to studying Pakistan's peoples and problems and Pakistan's Asian neighbors than has been true before. The Europe-centered syllabus is

being downgraded accordingly. In the past, department chairmen, chosen by the vice chancellor and the Ministry of Education, remained in their positions as long as they were politically correct. Under new arrangements, department chairmen are to be rotated, changing every two or three years, with consultation among faculty members prior to their selection. In these and other ways President Bhutto is suggesting that he hopes to open Pakistan's hitherto authoritarian mode of governance and institutional management to those lower in the hierarchical system.

Yet it is suspected that the old impulses die hard. There is a persisting anxiety that Bhutto, like his predecessors, is really an authoritarian at heart. How can one expect an approach to political power to change so abruptly? He himself is said to be personally arrogant, impatient with those who disagree, demanding absolute acquiescence more typical of a traditional, tribal sheikh than of an elected official, spokesman of the citizens on whose votes he depended for his office.

Anxieties persist also that the army may again assert itself to dominate affairs if Bhutto goes too far in his populism. Others believe he will use fear of an army takeover to retreat from the egalitarian, populist promises he made during the election. To be all things to all men is sometimes politically necessary in the short run; it does, however, weaken a leader's credibility. His very adroitness and remarkable ability to shift his position when the political need is apparent leads some followers—and opponents—to be wary of taking Bhutto's position today as fixed for long.

On the economic side Pakistan succeeded in shifting its export effort in short order. A sharp devaluation coupled with an energetic export drive made it possible to sustain exports and add to them the goods previously absorbed by East Pakistan. The substantial textile exports were mostly taken up in the Middle East, although imports to the United States have overrun the “gentlemen's agreement” and may have to be compensated for next year.

Domestic prices, however, have risen markedly, hitting particularly hard the people with lower incomes. Early dramatic policies against the “twenty families” and other industrialists brought popular favor. But these have been moderated, and the regime has cracked down hard on unauthorized strike activity. Although this has sharply diminished the earlier enthusiasm of urban labor for President Bhutto, particularly in Karachi, entrepreneurial confidence appears to be improving after severe anxieties following initial nationalizations. Industrial production still lags seriously, however, as nationalized industries have managerial difficulties, and the private sector continues to be cautious.

There are four major problems in foreign policy. Relations with Bangladesh are now in the realm of

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external affairs, a hard fact that is as distasteful to accept as it is impossible to alter. The constitutional drafts leave place for Bengalis to reassociate with Pakistan in some loose confederal arrangement, but after the ghastly events of March 25, 1971, and their aftermath no such possibility is in the cards. Recognition of Bangladesh and an exchange of military prisoners of war and civilians are thought to be likely in the late spring. However, it will be as difficult for Pakistan to accede to Mujib's need to hold trials of selected military officers as it will be for Mujib to restrain the hawks in his own coterie who want to be as harsh as possible against officers held responsible for the March repression.

Pakistan must find a new basis for a stable, viable and economical relationship with India, permitting a sharp reduction in military confrontation on both sides. The Simla Agreement promised a process of mutual adjustment and normalized relations. Although Bhutto made his political reputation on virulent anti-Indian rhetoric and by denouncing Ayub's acceptance of reality at Tashkent, many Pakistanis and Indians see Bhutto as sufficiently "pragmatic" to be able to accept the "new realities" of Pakistan's "junior partner" status on the subcontinent.

No one knows as yet what India will insist upon as a requisite for friendly relations under the changed circumstances. Kashmir is less salient now than at any time since the first war over Kashmir in 1948. Some Pakistanis interpret Mrs. Gandhi's utterances, at least as reported in Islamabad, to mean that India will insist that Pakistan not turn away from the subcontinent in order to develop relations with Iran, Turkey and countries in the Arab West, one natural option open to Islamabad now that it is freed from its obligations in Bengal.

The relationship with China is expected to be important even if there were a marked relaxation of relations between India and Pakistan. There are some who believe that China's contribution of military equipment since 1965 roughly matches what Washington provided during the previous decade. Since MIG 19s are better than F-86s and the tanks are said to be more appropriate, the equipment provided is more useful. As many Pakistanis see it, China's location on India's northern border is in some mea-

sure a guarantee that India will not be tempted to make the most of its presently overwhelming strength on the subcontinent.

The scope for changing Indo-Pakistan relations will depend more on the shape of Pakistan's internal politics and how India deals with its junior partner than on any ineluctable characteristics of the Asian state system. A government secure in its position at home in Islamabad will have less need to use an Indian threat for domestic purposes than may have been the case at times in the past. If India can dramatize the fact that it is not as hostile to the security of a much weaker Pakistan as many Pakistanis used to think (and to a considerable degree still think), it would be easier for Pakistani opponents of military expenditures to make a persuasive case in domestic politics. If India could draw China into a settlement of outstanding differences, Peking might give less backing to Islamabad. Since, however, it is the Russian intimacy with India which makes Pakistan of such contemporary importance to China, only a falling off of Indo-Soviet relations seems likely to reduce China's interest in Pakistan.

The future role of the United States, it is widely acknowledged, is unclear, but no one counts on Washington to provide the financial and hardware support it supplied for nearly a decade following the mid-1950's. And it is widely assumed that for the future South Asia will not be of such concern to the United States that Washington will be prepared to be very active—regardless of what happens. No longer can Pakistan count on Washington to affect the balance of forces between India and Pakistan, as Pakistan always hoped for during the 1955-1965 period, and as President Nixon attempted in 1971.

So, under the changed circumstances on the subcontinent, it seems likely that the Indians have a new scope for initiatives looking toward moderation and a relaxation of tension. But India's initiatives are bound to be limited by Delhi's concern for Bangladesh, an area of sharply increased Indian responsibility and concern.

Bangladesh, at least in Dacca, still looks like a country that has been through a war. Piles of rubble recall bombardment and calculated destruction; pillboxes and watchtowers in unexpected places attest to the winners' efforts to con-

strain the losers; improvised bridges carry reduced, slow-moving traffic; thousands are thankful to be alive after having seen their colleagues or fellow-citizens summarily shot or accidentally killed.

Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Bhutto are central figures in their countries' politics. India, however, has a substantial political party and a bureaucracy, and Pakistan has a bureaucracy and army in case of need. But in Bangladesh all hinges on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He is the center of all hopes and fears. The mark of prison martyrdom is still upon him; a traditional man of a village culture, he cannot bear to turn a petitioner away unheard. Never having had administrative responsibility, it is said, he does not know how to delegate, and all decisions wait while he chats with individuals in need. His is a very human, though often ineffectual, government in a time of great trouble.

Using the situation three years ago as a basis of comparison, Bangladesh is in far worse shape than before. Diets are more meager, mobility is more difficult, prices are sharply higher. People are fearful of going out at night because young people, now with arms, hijack cars and may leave the former owners dead in a ditch. Decisions go unmade as a divided Cabinet faces stalemate and the Sheikh, whose decisions could generally be implemented, is too busy with individual problems.

Compared to a year ago, however, things are far better than one could realistically have expected. A large part of the former "resistance fighters" have laid down their arms, or if they have buried them for future use, they have at least filtered back to civilian life. Only a few armed bands persist (in an area where the *ducoit*, or armed bandit, is a part of local tradition). The bureaucracy, in disarray last year, is now beginning to gain some rigor and momentum. And more senior Bengali officials are returning clandestinely from Pakistan to take up responsible positions in the new state. Experienced economic planners and financial advisors are grappling with high-level fiscal, development and foreign assistance policies.

The Sheikh won acceptance for a constitution which provides for general and regular elections for a parliamentary-type government. The March election returned him handsomely to power in a fresh confirmation of his mandate. There are those who note that this election brought into the Assembly more men loyal to him; and from this group he is expected to choose a more homogeneous cabinet, which will make more rapid, coherent decisions.

Others argue that this is naive. In the first place, they say, Bengalis have a long tradition of factionalism, of a very particularistic, patron-client type of politics. Families, small neighborhoods, blood or marriage relations and personal loyalty groups re-

main central to politics. The Bengalis are the French of South Asia, it is said, and demonstrate their intelligence as well as their manhood only by the vigor with which they disagree with one another.

What is more, the often self-critical Bengalis will insist, strong ideological differences also divide us. The "Left"—so it is alleged—want to eliminate the small margin of advantage the middle class retains, dragging all down into poverty except those who will man the new authoritarian party *apparat* the leftists are said to seek; the "leftists" argue that the small middle class batters on the labor of the Bengali masses and contributes little to their well-being. A younger group, including many students who formerly belonged to the ruling Awami League, has broken with Mujib and agitates on behalf of "scientific socialism" as against the imprecise social and economic program widely known as "Mujibism." Others hold that the "Left"- "Right" debate is a mere cover for familiar patron-client, clan divisions—the former only a bit more ingenious than the latter in finding issues likely to win mass support at the next election. Now that the "Right" has gained regional independence, it needs to find a new issue to arouse the mass following it will need to win elections in the future. Still others argue that the real axis of division is that between "hawk" and "dove." The hawks are still so bitter over what happened in March, 1971, that they will do anything to wreak revenge on those responsible for the Punjabi atrocities, while the doves seek reconciliation with Pakistan in a shared desire to fend off what some fear as a growing Indian hegemony over Bangladesh.

In this welter of contrasting opinions only the unfolding of political history can reveal which view is more nearly correct. It can be said, however, that certain divisions are now less acute than they were before. Many who were originally labeled "collaborators" for having been in the bureaucracy under the Pakistani "Punjabiraj" have been reinstated and are doing their best to make Bangladesh a success. Those who stayed behind in Bangladesh and fought in the resistance are no longer as bitter toward those who fled to Calcutta or were abroad, as was the case a year ago.

Good public order is still uncertain, though. Those known to have been unenthusiastic about independence are said still to feel uncertainty, fearing more the irregular violence of armed youths than any official reprisals. And as the election approached, irregular violence against political activists increased. Since then internal order has improved.

It can also be said that never in Bengal's history, even during the independence movement against Great Britain, were Bengalis so actively mobilized into political and even military action as during the resistance movement against Pakistan. Bengali politics until then had been largely verbal; its "martyrs" were subjected to British-type jail custody, where

politicals could read, write and even organize political movements without personal jeopardy. This time the risks were of life itself. Young men and women learned for the first time the risks—and joys—of direct violence. Dreams of Golden Bengal were vividly evoked which no regime within the foreseeable future can possibly fulfill.

On the economic side Bangladesh may be perpetually in parlous condition, but it is too soon to say. Few areas have richer soil or more sustainably productive climates. Three crops a year are not unlikely in many parts of the Delta. Rice is off this year because of very unseasonable drought in certain parts of the country, but there is much room to improve yields if the inputs can be distributed. Jute, the major export crop on which all has depended in the past, is returning to prewar production levels.

Bangladesh has not yet regained the foreign markets lost to synthetics during the fighting, however, and prospects of it doing so are uncertain. Textile production in mills owned by Pakistanis and nationalized during the fighting is not yet back to normal levels: there is scope for improvement here if management can be effective. Consumer prices for cloth and food have risen sharply during the past two years; unemployment is up. While the worst direct effects of the war are probably passed, the long-haul economic task remains enormous. It will require unaccustomed dynamic economic effort, changes in preferred ways of administration and new modes of organizing peasant agriculture in conditions of incredible overcrowding.

Bangladesh's foreign relations continue to be in flux. The Russians are numerous and obvious, at work with a staff of several hundred clearing the port of Chittagong. The Americans have had the USIS libraries and cultural centers burned out, it is said, by "leftists" who want to embarrass the Sheikh and induce the United States to stop its massive economic assistance efforts. Together with substantial Indian assistance, the worst fears of famine and epidemic were avoided last year. Massive outside help will be needed this year too.

Stories are rife that the Indians really pull all the strings, manage job appointments, manipulate politics and administration. In a political culture that prefers

conspiratorial explanations and that for decades has been used to attributing responsibility to others, it is perhaps natural that the Indians would be held responsible for all that happens. An outsider may be skeptical about the accuracy of these countless stories. They do, however, complicate the task of Indian officials, who no doubt see a substantial Indian interest in the development of a moderate, orderly and effective government in Bangladesh. What happens in Bangladesh can redound dramatically on Mrs. Gandhi's achievement in West Bengal, so Mrs. Gandhi's government will face major decisions in the coming year. China continues for the moment to stake its South Asia policy on Pakistan rather than on a forward policy designed to win friendship in Bangladesh.

Looking back in ten years observers may well conclude that all three countries had a good deal more in common than their leaders presently assume. Bangladesh faces the most acute political and economic difficulties, Pakistan somewhat less so, and India has the better prospects. But in all three countries a combination of domestic politics, improved communications and war have broadened and deepened political aspirations and drawn large numbers into public life to a degree quite unprecedented in South Asia's history, even at the time of independence.

Frustration with Congress divisions in the late 1960's and Mrs. Gandhi's populist appeals in 1970; the explosive impatience with Ayub's rule and Bhutto's promises of a new deal for Pakistan's poor in his 1971 campaign; the disruption and political agitation of repression, resistance and the establishment of a new regime based on popular elections in Bangladesh—all these have raised hopes and intensified popular demands. The demands are for both improved economic conditions for the many and broader participation in politics, at least for the educated and articulate.

It is highly unlikely that either of the three regimes will be able to give satisfaction in real terms to these popular aspirations. But the skills of political leadership and of organization may touch the deeper springs of human wants and render the intractable economic scarcities less crucial in the aftermath of the exhausting drama of the past two years.